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ABSTRACT

It was hypothesized that a positive improvement in Hispanic junior high school students' Spanish and English reading abilities, reading attitudes and academic self-concepts would result after being provided special reading time with a wide variety of reading materials in Spanish. An experimental (E) group of approximately 200 grade 7 and 8 Hispanic students in Tempe, Arizona, were provided at least 45 minutes a week of free reading time with access and encouragement to use Spanish newspapers, magazines, paperback and hardcover books during required homogeneously-grouped reading classes. Approximately 200 other Hispanic students, who had been enrolled in reading classes the previous year (1979-80) and were taught only basic reading skills and English and American literature, served as a control (C) group. The E and C groups were compared on measures of Spanish and English reading comprehension, speed and vocabulary: attitude toward reading: and academic self-concept. Findings suggested: the language which was exercised more showed the greater improvement: reading skills transferred across the two languages: where teachers were conscientious in implementation of the treatment, greater gains resulted in both English and Spanish achievement: and differences on the reading attitude and academic self-concept tests did not approach statistical significance. (NEC)

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# The Effects of Special Reading Time in Spanish on the Reading Abilities and Attitudes of Hispanic Junior High School Students

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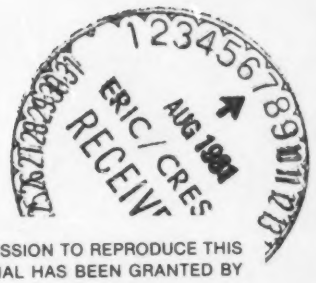


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## Background and Purpose

There is a number of recent studies which suggest that bilingual curricular emphases can positively influence the academic and cognitive functioning of students (Cummins, 1979). The purpose of this study is to determine whether providing special reading time with a wide variety of reading materials in Spanish affects the reading abilities, reading attitudes and academic self-concepts of Hispanic junior high school students. It was hypothesized that a positive improvement in the students' Spanish and English reading abilities, reading attitudes and academic self-concepts would result after the students were provided the curricular opportunity, structure, and Spanish reading materials.

## Program Description

The sixteen seventh and eighth grade reading teachers in the experimental school were provided with a wide variety of newspapers, magazines, paperback and hardback books in Spanish described by Schon (1978). The

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materials were selected because of their high-interest and wide range of readability. As a part of the required curriculum at this school, each student is in one of the twenty-seven homogeneously grouped reading classes for approximately 45 minutes daily. The teachers in the control (C) group reported that they taught basic English reading skills to the students of the lowest reading groups (where most of the Hispanics were enrolled) and English and American literature to the more advanced reading classes. Teachers in the experiment (E) group were instructed to provide at least forty-five minutes a week of free reading time and to encourage interested students to read the Spanish reading materials. A bilingual resource person visited each reading teacher biweekly to update the Spanish reading materials, to provide guidance in the use of the materials, and to monitor the particular emphasis and style of each teacher; these are briefly summarized in the Appendix. The treatment was continued for eight-and-a-half months to maximize genuine treatment effects and to minimize novelty artifacts.

The Hispanic students in the classes of the sixteen reading teachers in the same school in the year previous to the implementation of the experimental treatment served as the C group. In both the E and C groups, two of the teachers were bilingual Hispanics; the other fourteen teachers being monolingual Anglos. The median number of years of teaching experience was approximately 10 and 11 for the C and E groups respectively.

## Subjects

The experimentally accessible subjects for this study were approximately 200 Hispanic students for group C and 200 for group E who were enrolled in a junior high school (grades seven and eight) in the Tempe

Elementary School District in Tempe, Arizona. The school is situated in a high-income area; 25 percent of the students attending the school are Hispanic, ninety percent of which are bussed from a low-income area.

## Research Design

To control the teacher and school factors as much as possible the C group consisted of the students at the same junior high school during 1979-80 -- the year prior to the implementation of the experimental treatment. Thus, group C would be expected to differ negligibly from group E in socio-economic background, achievement levels, academic attitudes, bilingualism, previous educational experience and other relevant variables. To control for any non-equivalence between the E and C groups and to increase statistical power, the total score on the Stanford Reading Test (SRT) was used to statistically equate the groups via an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). The SRT had been given at grade 6.7 for the grade 7 students and at 7.7 for the grade 8 students. The principal statistical design utilized two factors, treatment and sex, resulting in a 2X2 ANCOVA.

Ancillary analyses were performed for the subset of teachers who taught at the school during both the E and C periods to assess possible teacher-by-treatment interaction effects. A second ancillary analysis classified the Hispanic students with regard to whether or not they were enrolled in a "Spanish for Spanish speakers" course so that the possible interaction of this factor with the treatment could be studied.

## Criterion Measures

The seventh and eighth E and C groups were compared on the following dependent variables: Spanish reading comprehension (SRC), speed (SRS),

and vocabulary (SRV); English reading comprehension (ERC), speed (ERS) and vocabulary (ERV); attitude toward reading (RA), and academic self-concept (ASC). The cognitive variables were assessed using the Tests of Reading: Inter-American Series (IA) (Herschel T. Manuel; Guidance Testing Associates, San Antonio, Texas). To reduce the effects of differential guessing that would confound the E-C comparisons, all IA reading scores were corrected for chance and expressed as percent correct. These tests provide parallel measures in three areas of reading competency in both Spanish and English. The English and Spanish versions differ only in the language employed -- they are literal item-by-item translations. Level 3 (designated for grades 4-6) of both the Spanish and English versions was used.

The measures of reading attitudes and academic self-concept were developed/adapted by the authors in a previous research study (Schon, Hopkins, & Davis, 1981). Illustrative of the 20 Reading Attitude (RA) items are: Do you like to read?" "Are most books interesting?" Illustrative of the 25 Academic Self-concept (ASC) items are: "Do you worry a lot?" "Do you make new friends easily?" Examinees responded on a three-point scale: "Si," "?," and "No." The tests were read to the students in both Spanish and English so that the meaning of the questions could be processed in either or both languages.

To control for possible instrumentation artifacts from the teachers' involvement in test administration and other unstandardized factors, all affective and objective measures were administered by one of the authors. To reduce the students' response bias toward giving the perceived socially desired response on the attitude measures, the students responded anonymously

and were admonished to "please be completely honest" and told that "No one will know which paper is yours. We need to know exactly how students feel." To allow the pretest and posttest to be matched-up and yet maintain anonymity, each student wrote his mother's maiden name on the test.)

The reliability of the RA and ASC measures was estimated by the Hoyt method separately by grade for the E and C groups and was found to be satisfactory for group comparisons; the reliability coefficients ranged from .70 to .79 for RA and .74 to .80 for ASC.

## Results

The sample sizes, adjusted means and effect sizes on the eight dependent variables for the E and C groups at grades 7 and 9 are given in Table 1. At grade seven, the mean difference achieved statistical significance ($\alpha$ = .10) on only one of the eight measures, English reading comprehension (ERC) which favored the control group. At grade eight, three of the differences achieved statistical significance; two Spanish Reading Vocabulary (SRV) and Spanish Reading Speed (SRS) favored the E group, and one English Reading Comprehension (ERC) favored the C group.

It is interesting to note that on all six comparison in English reading achievement, the C group had the higher mean, although the statistical significance criterion was achieved in only two instances. On the other hand the E group had the higher mean in 5 of the 6 comparisons in Spanish reading. Thus the general findings, including the four statistically significant comparisons, support the common-sense conclusion that the language which is exercised more shows the greater improvement.

Since the English and Spanish reading tests are parallel, a comparison

of the absolute value of the means is meaningful. Not surprisingly, the English means are much higher than the Spanish means in reading vocabulary, comprehension, and speed. The corrected-for-guessing means on the English reading tests tended to be about 35%, whereas on the Spanish tests the means were only about 10%.

No difference in reading attitude (RA) and academic self-concept (ASC) approached statistical significance.

## Interactions

Although the typical pattern of higher reading performance and reading attitudes for females was observed, this pattern was consistent within both the E and C groups, i.e., there was no trend for a treatment-by-sex interaction.

Seven of the teachers were involved in both E and C groups. For this subset of teachers and their students, a treatment-by-teacher ANCOVA was performed on each of the eight dependent variables, with the result that there was no evidence for a treatment-by-teacher interaction on the cognitive or affective variables. (One of the eight interactions achieved the .10 level of statistical significance, but in view of the eight opportunities for a type-I error, a single finding is not cogent evidence for a true interaction.)

An ANCOVA was performed to see if the treatment effects were differentially influenced by the factor of whether or not students were taking a "Spanish for Spanish speakers" course. There was no evidence that this factor interacted with the treatment conditions.

Table 1. Adjusted Means[a] for the Dependent Measures for the E and C Groups by Grade

| Grade 7 | E | | C | | ES[b] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | $\bar{X}$ | N | $\bar{X}$ | |
| ERV | 63 | 34.80 | 52 | 35.48 | -.04σ |
| ERS | 60 | 34.88 | 52 | 36.91 | -.11σ |
| ERC** | 61 | 27.28 | 50 | 37.01 | -.51σ |
| SRV | 30 | 11.97 | 41 | 9.12 | .28σ |
| SRS | 25 | 8.33 | 35 | 8.72 | -.06σ |
| SRC | 22 | 9.81 | 25 | 7.45 | .36σ |
| RA | 84 | 67.40 | 58 | 69.80 | -.24σ |
| ASC | 84 | 68.76 | 58 | 67.26 | .17σ |
| **Grade 8** | | | | | |
| ERV | 64 | 35.90 | 52 | 39.31 | -.16σ |
| ERS | 64 | 40.13 | 50 | 41.42 | -.06σ |
| ERC* | 62 | 31.13 | 50 | 37.63 | -.32σ |
| SRV* | 40 | 13.25 | 50 | 9.46 | .43σ |
| SRS* | 21 | 13.81 | 34 | 8.65 | .61σ |
| SRC | 11 | 10.31 | 41 | 9.27 | .14σ |
| RA | 81 | 67.35 | 57 | 68.98 | -.14σ |
| ASC | 81 | 69.10 | 57 | 66.78 | .23σ |

* $p < .10$
** $p < .01$

[a]Means are percent of items correct, after applying the correction for guessing on the six cognitive measures.

[b]$ES = (\bar{X}_{C_{adj}} - \bar{X}_{C_{adj}}) / \sqrt{MS_{within_{unadj}}}$

## Treatment Fidelity

The monitoring of the project revealed that some teachers were either not implementing the suggested treatment procedure or were perfunctory in their implementation of the recommended procedures. Consequently, prior to the obtaining of any criterion measure, teachers who were diligent in their implementation were identified (N=5) so that the results from their classes could be contrasted with those of teachers who lacked fidelity in the treatment procedure (N=11). An analysis of variance of the gain scores, as shown in Table 2, for these two groups revealed that the hi-fidelity group had larger gains on all English and Spanish reading ability tests and the two attitude (RA and ASC) measures; the gains were significantly greater on four of the tests (ERV, ERC, SRV, and SRS) at about the .05 level or less. The differences in gains expressed as effect sizes, (where the standard deviations of the gains are the denominators for the effect sizes), are also given in Table 2. Thus it appears that where teachers were conscientious in their implementation of the treatment, greater gains resulted in reading achievement in both English and Spanish. This conclusion is suggestive rather than definitive, however, since it is possible that the conscientious teachers could have been the more professional and dedicated teachers to begin with. Nevertheless the results are promising.

## Correlational Findings

Considerable stability in the students' rank order on the pretest and posttest on the cognitive and affective measures was evidenced. The

Table 2. Mean Percent Gains[a] for the Hi-fidelity (N=5) and Other Teachers (N=11) on the Dependent Measures

| | Hi-fidelity | | Other | | ES |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | $\bar{X}$ | N | $\bar{X}$ | |
| ERV* | 48 | 6.75 | 60 | 1.49 | .38σ |
| ERS | 48 | 8.55 | 60 | 4.69 | .26σ |
| ERC* | 48 | 1.70 | 60 | -4.20 | .43σ |
| SRV* | 15 | 9.67 | 24 | 1.78 | .88σ |
| SRS* | 6 | 12.23 | 12 | - .34 | 1.37σ |
| SRC | 6 | 4.43 | 4 | 3.75 | .12σ |
| RA | 38 | -2.28 | 46 | -2.79 | .05σ |
| ASC | 38 | -1.09 | 46 | -2.78 | .18σ |

* $p < .05$

[a]Mean gains is the percent of items answered corrected after correction for guessing, except for the two attitude measures, RA and ASC, which are raw scores.

stability correlation coefficients for the three English reading measures and the three Spanish reading measures fell within the .70—.80 range. For the RA and ASC, the one-year stability coefficients were .47 and .55 respectively.

In addition, within the E group there were low but positive correlations (.21—.51) between growth in English reading with growth in Spanish reading, suggesting that there is a transfer in reading skills across the two languages. For example, if reading speed improves in one language it tends also to increase in the other language.

## Summary

All experimentally accessible Hispanic students in a Junior High School during the control and experimental periods were the subjects of this study. The E treatment consisted in providing special reading time with a wide variety of reading materials in Spanish. Common reading measures in both English and Spanish, and related attitude tests, were given to the E and C students near the end of the school year. On most of the measures, the difference between the E and C groups was not statistically significant. On the four measures for which significance ($\alpha = .10$) was attained (and on the other tests not achieving statistical significance) there was a trend for the E group to perform better on the Spanish reading tests and the C group to do better on the English reading tests. Differences on the reading attitude and academic self-concept tests did not approach statistical significance. The pattern of results was consistent for both sexes, and for students who were, and who were not, taking a Spanish language course, and for students whose teachers taught in both the E and C situations.

Prior to the administration of the posttests the project coordinator identified the E teachers who were conscientious in following through on the recommended use of the Spanish reading materials. These teachers tended to have significantly greater gains in both English and Spanish reading achievement.

Within the E group, gains in English and Spanish reading abilities were positively correlated.

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Appendix

Teachers of Experimental Groups

Teacher* 1 is a female Anglo with ten years teaching experience. Her students had approximately forty minutes of free reading time a week during the academic year. She had an accelerated reading class with five Hispanic students and a lower reading class with eighteen Hispanics. Most of the Hispanic students in her accelerated class enjoyed having free reading time and reading in Spanish. Approximately 25% of her slower Hispanic readers enjoyed reading in Spanish at the end of the school year, whereas at the beginning of the year most of the Hispanic students felt that it was demeaning to read in Spanish. She believes that it is a fantastic idea to put reading material in Spanish in the classrooms.

Teacher 2 is a female Hispanic with thirteen years teaching experience. She had a total of twelve Hispanic students in her two reading classes. The students had free silent reading forty-five minutes a week during the academic year. She noted that approximately four Hispanic students read enthusiastically in Spanish, especially easy-to-read magazines and newspapers, and that others would read occasionally in Spanish. She reported that five Hispanic students who were also better students, enjoyed using books in Spanish for their research papers, including one Anglo boy, who wrote a paper on futbol soccer.

*When the same teacher served in Experimental and Control groups, the teacher number is the same in both groups.

Teacher 3 is a male Hispanic with nine years teaching experience. His reading class had free reading time every Monday and Friday during the academic year. He had a total of twenty-eight students out of which sixteen were Hispanic. He reported that all the students in his class progressed very well, especially in reading, including five or six Hispanics who will be advanced to an accelerated reading class. He stated that ten Hispanics in his class received Arizona state reading certificates (for reading 25 books or more) in Spanish and English. He noted that several Hispanic students stated that this was the first time in their lives that they had ever seen educational or recreational books or newspapers in Spanish. He stated that there was not enough support or encouragement from the school administration regarding Hispanics and reading in Spanish.

Teacher 4 is a male Anglo with twenty years teaching experience. He had thirty students in his reading class out of which twenty-six were Hispanic. His students had an average of sixty minutes a week of free reading time in which the students could select newspapers, magazines or books in Spanish. He believes that it is up to the teacher to motivate the students to read and to intrigue them about learning new things. He stated that many Hispanic students were not familiar with their language or culture, nevertheless, approximately 70% of the Hispanic students in his class read in Spanish during free reading time and seemed to enjoy doing so.

Teacher 5 is a male Anglo with seventeen years teaching experience. He was very enthusiastic about providing students free reading time and reading materials in Spanish. Five out of the six Hispanic students in his reading class slowly developed an interest in reading in Spanish. Towards the end of the school year, these students were very excited about reading books in Spanish and requested to go to the library three times a week to read books in Spanish. He stated that it was difficult to get them interested in their other classwork, as they only wanted to read Spanish books.

Teacher 6 is a female Anglo with eight years teaching experience. She taught two humanities classes (high reading groups) in which no Hispanic students were enrolled. Her students had free silent reading forty-five minutes a week for most of the academic year. In her homeroom she noted that approximately 30% of the Hispanic students were interested in reading simple magazines or newspapers in Spanish. She reported very little interest in the books in Spanish.

Teacher 7 is a female Anglo with eight years teaching experience. She had two reading classes with a total of eighteen Hispanic students. Her better readers had approximately twenty minutes a week of free reading time during the academic year, however, her slow readers had only about twenty minutes a month of free reading time. The slow readers had oral reading in English almost every day. She reported that the Anglo students were more interested in the newspapers in Spanish than the Hispanic students and that only three Hispanic students could read in Spanish. She stated that six times during the year she asked somebody to read out loud in Spanish to her students and that a few Hispanic students wrote book reports in Spanish.

Teacher 8 is a female Anglo with ten years teaching experience. She took over a low reading class at the beginning of the second semester in which she had a total of twenty-six students; twenty of these were Hispanic. The better students in her class had approximately fifteen minutes a day of free reading time, whereas the slower students had approximately five minutes a day of free reading time during the semester. She noted that ten or twelve Hispanic students read in Spanish once or twice a week and several seemed to really enjoy doing so. However, she is concerned about the lackadaisical attitude that approximately half of the Hispanic students demonstrate in her class.

Teacher 9 is a female Anglo with thirteen years teaching experience. She had free reading time very Friday in her two reading classes in which she had a total of eighteen Hispanic students. She noted that the more advanced Hispanic students read magazines and books in Spanish, however, none of the slower Hispanic students read in Spanish. She also stated that the slower Hispanic students read only very simple books in English and that the brighter Hispanic students will "take either English or Spanish books." She believes that the brighter Hispanic students could have managed very well without the reading materials in Spanish.

Teacher 10 is a male Anglo with nine years of teaching experience. He had a total of twenty-six Hispanic students in his two reading classes. They had forty minutes a week of free reading time which "most of the students did not want." He noted that approximately eight or nine Hispanic students sometimes read books in Spanish and that one or two Hispanic students would take home the weekly newspapers in Spanish. He stated that they read more in English than in Spanish. (This teacher had surgery on April 17 and did not resume his teaching activities during the academic year.)

Teacher 11 is a male Anglo with eight years teaching experience. He is a strong believer in free silent reading and his students had free silent reading forty-five minutes a week during the academic year. He had a total of four Hispanic students in his two reading classes. He reported that the Hispanic students in his class never displayed any interest in the newspapers, magazines or books in Spanish. He did notice, however, that a few Anglo students in his reading classes attempted to read comic books in Spanish. He believes that there should be reading materials in Spanish in the library for those students who want to read them.

Teacher 12 is a female Anglo with ten years teaching experience. She taught a humanities reading class in which only one Hispanic student was enrolled. She had free reading time every Friday in which many students requested to do their homework or draw. She stated that "the books and magazines in Spanish did not go at all" and that "it is not worth having reading materials in Spanish in the classrooms." The Hispanic girl in her class seemed initially pleased about having reading materials in Spanish in the classroom, although she "grew weary of them" at the end.

Teacher 13 is a male Anglo with nine years teaching experience. His students had forty-five minutes a week of free reading time and noted that the majority of his students reacted well to it. He had a total of four Hispanic students in his two reading classes and reported that they were uninterested in reading in Spanish. He stated that perhaps reading materials in Spanish might be better in another situation, but that in his classes they were not utilized that much.

Teacher 14 is a female Anglo with seventeen years teaching experience. She had a total of five Hispanics in her two reading classes. Her students averaged approximately thirty minutes a week of free reading time. With the exception of one Hispanic and two Anglo students who occasionally displayed some interest in the newspaper in Spanish, there was "no interest in any reading material in Spanish" in either of her classes. She believes that it was not worthwhile to have reading materials in Spanish in her classroom. She also stated that Hispanic students are not interested in reading in English either and that: "They are not interested in reading anything. They are in this class because they are not good readers."

Teacher 15 is a male Anglo with eight years teaching experience. He had a total of fifteen Hispanic students in his two reading classes. The students had forty minutes a week of free reading time which "became a drudgery for the kids. Many were fed up with it and others only tolerated it." All the Hispanic students in his classes "totally ignored the books, newspapers and magazines in Spanish." He also stated that he would not allow Anglo students to read Spanish books in his class and that for several months he did not mention the weekly newspapers in Spanish to the students. So, because "there is no interest in the newspapers, I keep throwing them away."

Teacher 16 is a female Anglo with thirteen years teaching experience. She had one Hispanic student in her advanced literature class. The students had approximately eighty minutes a week of free reading time which they "really enjoyed. They think it's marvelous." She stated that the reading materials in Spanish were not used by the students and that the Hispanic girl in her class went through a few, but avoided being too closely associated with them.

## Teachers of Control Groups

Teacher 1 is a female Anglo with nine years teaching experience. She taught two reading classes in which she emphasized success in communication, English comprehension and vocabulary.

Teacher 2 is a female Hispanic with twelve years teaching experience. She taught one low reading class in which she emphasized English decoding and word analysis skills. Twenty-four out of the twenty-six students in this class were Hispanic. She taught another more advanced reading class in which the students enjoyed reading various magazines such as Low Rider and Body Building.

Teacher 6 is a female Anglo with seven years teaching experience. She taught basic seventh-grade English reading skills. She reported being surprised by some of the books and magazines which her Hispanic students were interested in reading. These dealt with incest, rape, and "adult" true romances.

Teacher 7 is a female Anglo with seven years teaching experience. She taught English vocabulary, skill development and writing book reports to her two reading classes.

Teacher 8 is a female Anglo with nine years teaching experience. She taught one low reading class in which many Hispanic students were enrolled. She emphasized English vocabulary and comprehension.

Teacher 11 is a male Anglo with seven years teaching experience. He taught English and American literature to his advanced reading class in which only one Hispanic student was enrolled. In his slower reading class, in which fourteen Hispanics were enrolled, he emphasized vocabulary comprehension, oral reading and the relationship of a story to the present day.

Teacher 12 is a female Anglo with nine years teaching experience. She had three Hispanic students in her literature class. She taught various types of literature, such as fiction, imagery, metaphor, simile.

Teacher 13 is a male Anglo with eight years teaching experience. He had only two Hispanic students in his American and English literature classes, in which his major emphasis was the students' appreciation of literature including short stories and poetry.

Teacher 14 is a female Anglo with sixteen years teaching experience. She taught an advanced reading class where she stressed English comprehension, writing complete sentences as well as fun projects related to reading.

Teacher 15 is a male Anglo with seven years teaching experience. He taught two reading classes in which he emphasized English comprehension and reference study skills.

Teacher 16 is a female Anglo with twelve years teachers experience. She taught an advanced reading class with very few Hispanics. The class included discussion of values, self-awareness, awareness of the arts, music, famous artists, musicians, and philosophers.

Teacher 17 is a female Hispanic with ten years teaching experience. She taught one low reading class with approximately twenty Hispanic students. She emphasized English vocabulary, comprehension and word attack skills. To encourage the students to enjoy reading, she used high-interest, low-vocabulary books in English.

Teacher 18 is a female Anglo with fifteen years teaching experience. She taught two low reading classes in which many Hispanics were enrolled. She emphasized English vocabulary and comprehension.

Teacher 19 is a female Anglo with five years teaching experience. She taught a low reading class in which approximately thirty Hispanic students were enrolled. She reported that Hispanic students had a very poor English vocabulary; therefore she emphasized teaching simple grammar and the meaning of words as well as written expression.

Teacher 20 is a female Anglo with twenty years teaching experience. She taught one regular reading class with very few Hispanic students. She emphasized English vocabulary, reading skills, skimming, and outlining.

Teacher 21 is a female Anglo with two years teaching experience. She taught an advanced reading class with very few Hispanic students. She emphasized English reading skills, map reading, metaphors, similes and vocabulary words.